

TOP SECRET SENSITIVE 311040Z OCT 72 VI CAS CHANNELS (BUNKER)  
SECTION 1 OF 2

DOS Review Completed

FROM: AMBASSADOR BUNKER SAIGON 0640 IMMEDIATE  
TO: THE WHITE HOUSE, EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY FOR HENRY A. KISSINGER  
REFS: A) WHS 2304; B) WHS 2306

1. I DELIVERED THIS MORNING THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT THIEU WITH THE CHANGE IN TEXT AS INSTRUCTED IN REF B. THIEU READ THE LETTER CAREFULLY AND THEN PROCEEDED TO RECOUNT THE APPREHENSIONS AND CONCERNS WHICH HE CLAIMED TROUBLED THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE AS WELL AS HIMSELF.

2. WHEN HANOI PUBLISHED THE TEXT OF THE AGREEMENT, THIEU SAID, UNEASINESS DEVELOPED HERE. PEOPLE DID NOT UNDERSTAND HOW THE AGREEMENT HAD BEEN DEVELOPED AND AT DR. KISSINGER'S PRESS CONFERENCE WHEN "SMALL DETAILS" WERE REFERRED TO WITH NO EMPHASIS ON THE MAIN PRINCIPLES -- THE DMZ, NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS REMAINING IN THE SOUTH, AND "COALITION GOVERNMENT" AS HANOI HAD CALLED THE NCRC -- PEOPLE'S APPREHENSIONS WERE INCREASED. THERE WAS A FEELING THAT WE HAD GONE TOO FAR, TOO FAST; THAT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN MORE LOGICAL TO HAVE WORKED OUT A DRAFT AGREEMENT OF PRINCIPLES WHICH COULD HAVE BEEN DISCUSSED HERE AND THEN TAKEN UP AGAIN WITH THE OTHER SIDE. THE IMPRESSION GAINED HERE FROM THE HANOI BROADCAST THAT DEADLINES HAD BEEN SET AND THEN POSTPONED HAD ALSO CAUSED MUCH CONFUSION. IT WAS NOT UNDERSTOOD WHY HANOI HAD BEEN GIVEN A PRETEXT TO CRITICIZE US.

3. I INTERVENED TO SAY THAT WHAT THIEU WAS SAYING IN EFFECT WAS THAT HANOI'S WORD WAS BEING TAKEN AT FACE VALUE AND NOT OURS. DR. KISSINGER HAD MADE CLEAR MANY TIMES THAT THE AGREEMENT WAS AD REFERENDUM. IF EVIDENCE WERE NEEDED IT WAS THE FACT THAT THE AGREEMENT HAD NOT BEEN SIGNED AT HANOI'S BEHEST, AND THAT WE WERE COMMITTED TO DOING OUR UTMOST TO SECURE THE CHANGES THE GVN WANTED. AFTER ALL THESE YEARS AND ALL THAT WE HAD DONE IF THERE WAS NOT TRUST BETWEEN US, THEN THE SITUATION WAS TRULY HOPELESS. INSTEAD OF INFORMING THE PEOPLE OF THE TERMS OF THE AGREEMENT AND EXPLAINING ITS PROVISIONS, HOW THESE WOULD WORK AND WHAT THEY WOULD ACCOMPLISH, THE GVN HAD JOINED IN CRITICISM OF IT AND OF US.

4. THIEU THEN TURNED TO THE QUESTION OF THE NCRC WHICH HE SAID WAS A MATTER OF CONCERN HERE AND WE NEEDED TO BE CLEAR ABOUT IT; HANOI KEEPS REFERRING TO IT AS A GOVERNMENT. WITH A COALITION GOVERNMENT, PEOPLE HERE THINK THE GVN WILL SURVIVE ONLY SIX MONTHS, PROVIDED THE AGREEMENT IS OBSERVED; IF IT IS NOT OBSERVED, SOUTH VIET-NAM WILL BE PUT IN THE WRONG.

5. I REPLIED THAT THIS WAS JUST A CASE IN POINT. ANY OBJECTIVE EXAMINATION OF THE AGREEMENT WILL INDICATE THAT THE NCRC IS NOT IN ANY SENSE A GOVERNMENT, THAT IT HAS NO GOVERNMENTAL FUNCTIONS. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE ENTIRE STRUCTURE OF THE SVN GOVERNMENT IS MAINTAINED -- THE PRESIDENCY, THE LEGISLATURE, THE JUDICIARY, PROVINCE, DISTRICT AND HAMLET CHIEFS, THE WHOLE APPARATUS OF GOVERNMENT. THE GVN CONTROLS 90 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION. THE NATIONALISTS OUTNUMBER THE NLF TEN TO ONE. HOW CAN THE GOVERNMENT BE WIPED OUT BY ELECTIONS?

6. THIEU THEN SAID THAT ANOTHER MAJOR CONCERN IS THE FACT THAT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS WILL REMAIN IN SOUTH VIET-NAM. PEOPLE ASK WHY NORTH VIET-NAM SHOULD HAVE THIS RIGHT WHEN THEY WITHDRAW FROM CAMBODIA AND LAOS. IN THE LAST FIFTEEN YEARS, THE NORTH HAS SENT A MILLION MEN SOUTH AND HAS NOT YET BEEN ABLE TO WIN THE WAR. WHY THEN SHOULD THEY HAVE THE RIGHT TO STAY SOUTH?

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INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

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7. I REPLIED THAT, AS HE KNEW, THIS WAS A MATTER WHICH DR. KISSINGER WOULD TAKE UP WITH THE OTHER SIDE. WHETHER OR NOT THIS COULD BE RESOLVED TO HIS ENTIRE SATISFACTION WAS DIFFICULT TO SAY. IT WAS VERY HARD FOR ME TO BELIEVE THAT WITH A FORCE OF 1,100,000 IN BEING, A RATIO IN FAVOR OF THE GVN OF ABOUT 7.5:1, PLUS 120,000 POLICE, AND A MILLION COMBAT PSDF THAT THE GVN COULD NOT HANDLE 143,000 NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS WHICH INCLUDED REAR SERVICE, ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT AS WELL AS COMBAT TROOPS. THIEU ADMITTED THAT THEY COULD HANDLE THE NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS BUT FEARED THEY MIGHT ATTEMPT ANOTHER OFFENSIVE. I POINTED OUT THAT THIS WOULD BE A CLEAR VIOLATION OF THE AGREEMENT AND IN THAT CASE WE WOULD REACT STRONGLY AS HE HAD BEEN ASSURED BY BOTH THE PRESIDENT AND DR. KISSINGER.

8. THIEU THEN ENUMERATED HIS OTHER CONCERNS - A THREE SEGMENT NCRC, LACK OF MENTION OF THE FOUR STATES OF INDOCHINA, ACCEPTANCE OF A GENERAL ELECTION. "PEOPLE WILL SAY THAT HANOI HAS GOTTEN EVERYTHING THEY HAVE ASKED FOR -- A COALITION, ELIMINATION OF THIEU, THAT VIET-NAM IS ONE, AND NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS REMAIN IN THE SOUTH."

9. I SAID THAT, AS HE KNEW, THE MENTION OF THREE STATES OF INDOCHINA WAS AN OVERSIGHT WHICH WOULD BE CORRECTED; THAT THE NCRC HAD TO ACT ON THE PRINCIPLE OF UNANIMITY AND, THEREFORE, THE GVN HAD A VETO ON ANY OF ITS ACTIONS. THE NATURE OF THE ELECTIONS WHICH ARE TO BE HELD WOULD BE DECIDED BY DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES, BUT WE AND THE GVN HAD ALWAYS PROPOSED ELECTIONS UNDER INTERNATIONAL SUPERVISION. IT SEEMED TO ME THAT THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE PEOPLE WERE ENTITLED TO HAVE ALL THESE FACTS PRESENTED TO THEM AND GIVEN AN ACCURATE PICTURE OF WHAT THE AGREEMENT INVOLVES AND WHAT IT REALLY DOES. WE ARE QUITE CLEAR IN OUR MINDS THAT THE GVN HAS WON OUT. HANOI HAS GIVEN UP DEMANDS WHICH THEY HAVE HELD TO STUBBORNLY FOR FOUR YEARS, DEMANDS FOR HIS ELIMINATION AND A COALITION GOVERNMENT AND THIS IS WHAT THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE PEOPLE HAVE A RIGHT TO KNOW.

10. I THEN SAID I WANTED TO SPEAK AS FRIEND AND ADMIRER, AS ONE WHO HAD SUPPORTED HIM ALL THROUGH THE FIVE AND ONE-HALF YEARS I HAVE SERVED AS AMBASSADOR, THAT I, TOO, WAS DEEPLY CONCERNED THAT THE OMINOUS DRIFTING APART OF THE POSITIONS OF OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS MAY BE IRRECONCILABLE. AS PRESIDENT NIXON HAS POINTED OUT, SUCH A SITUATION COULD LEAD ONLY TO DISASTER AND TO COMPLETE FAILURE IN OUR EFFORT TO ACHIEVE THE GOALS WE HAVE STRIVEN SO LONG AND SO PAINFULLY TO ACHIEVE. THE ONLY WISE COURSE FOR BOTH OF US TO FOLLOW NOW IS TO AWAIT THE RESULTS OF DR. KISSINGER'S DISCUSSIONS WITH THE OTHER SIDE BEFORE ENGAGING IN FURTHER ACTIVITIES WHICH CAN ONLY SERVE TO CREATE THE IMPRESSION IN VIET-NAM, IN THE UNITED STATES, AND ABROAD THAT WE ARE EMBARKED ON A CONFRONTATION COURSE. AS PRESIDENT NIXON HAS SO CLEARLY STATED, THIS CAN ONLY BE DISASTROUS FOR BOTH OF US.

11. OUR CONVERSATION WAS CARRIED OUT CALMLY AND WITH NONE OF THE TENSENESS WHICH HAD CHARACTERIZED PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS. THIS WAS NO DOUBT DUE IN LARGE PART TO THE SOBERING EFFECT OF THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER WHICH, AS I MENTIONED EARLIER, I THINK WAS EXACTLY WHAT WAS NEEDED AT THIS MOMENT. I LEFT WITH THE IMPRESSION THAT THIEU HAD ABSORBED THE POINT THAT THIS DRIFT APART MUST BE HALTED. WE SHOULD HAVE A BETTER READING BEFORE LONG WHETHER THIS IS SO, FOR NHA HAS CALLED

TO SAY THAT THIEU WILL HAVE REPLY FOR THE PRESIDENT.